

My name is Graham Parker;

I am a research professor at Wayne State University, working in the division of Pediatric Neurology at the Children's Hospital of Michigan.

My work has exclusively been on somatic stem cells, previously having worked with blood and neural stem cell populations.

Hence, I have no direct personal or professional gain to be made by the furtherance of embryonic stem cell research in Michigan.

In fact, it could be argued, its advancement in Michigan is against my personal professional interest.

But as the editor-in-chief of the international peer-reviewed journal, "Stem Cells and Development",

I am in a relatively unique position to critically evaluate how the various avenues of stem cell research are progressing.

The recent programming of cells from adult tissue to produce cells with the same apparent potential as embryonic stem cells to proliferate and differentiate into multiple cell types are exciting advances, but are simply that, advances.

All of that work is derived from discoveries made in embryonic stem cell research by embryonic stem cell researchers.

More discoveries need to be made; biomedical research is no different to any other field of scientific endeavor:

a local discovery made in one avenue here, can solve an unsolved problem there, and together synthesize a global solution.

No-one has yet been cured of anything with induced or embryonic pluripotent stem cells.

But better models of disease have been achieved, and progress to cures will be made.

We need America's brightest and best to be working on all avenues of stem cell research,

and I believe Michigan has the brightest and the best, researchers and students.

Regulation of all biomedical research is of course required,

with institutional review by federally mandated boards including non-scientists as well as members of the public to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

This is not the time to be scaring biomedical research away from Michigan, and indeed the U.S.,

with proposed amendments to a bill that was voted for by the people of Michigan.

These amendments contain threats of jail time and fines predicated on confusing language and dubious definitions.

For example, the criterion for embryo suitability in paragraph (E) of page 4 of Bill 647 requires the embryo:

"exhibits physiological characteristics that, in the best judgment of the attending physician, make successful implantation and gestation of the human embryo less than 50% likely".

The most successful IVF clinic in the world has a success rate of only 20-30% per embryo, rendering by your definition all embryos unsuitable for implantation.

My personal moral beliefs are consistent with the use of what would otherwise be discarded embryos to help solve biomedical problems and develop cures.

If your moral beliefs are inconsistent with that, fine, I may try to persuade you otherwise,

but I would not dream of trying to enforce my belief on you: I respect your position and your right not to agree with me.

But the majority of the voters on Proposal 2 in Michigan do agree with me, and I would ask you to respect their decision.

Thank you for your time and kind attention.